Media Presentation on “Monet’s Water lilies” and “Vietnam”

There is a connection between the two poems that I wanted to explore visually, with sound, and with text. In the first line of the poem, Monet’s Water lilies, the speaker mentions news from “Saigon” which “poisons the air like fallout” (Hayden 1-2). In order to escape from his tortured reality, the speaker retraces his steps back to the museum “again to see the serene, great painting that [he] loves” (Hayden 4). The interactive experience that the speaker portrays with the painting leads to the posing of a universal truth about art. In the final stanza of the poem, it is suggested that the pieces of art that each person loves is because of the art’s ability to rekindle a feeling of something that has been lost by the individual. The emotion we feel in looking at a piece which moves us, according to the speaker, is the “shadow” of the original experience because it invokes only the memory of the thing, not the thing itself. Thus, despite his loss of innocence, the painting is able to transport the speaker back to a time when his life was innocent and allow him to temporarily indulge in the memory.

Ideally, I would have been able to use flash for this project and interpose images of the painting with images from the Vietnam War. I would like to have been able to have strings of text appear over the images from both poems in a randomly generated fashion. Sound and music are very significant to me, so I would have liked to parse in clips of Enya’s, “Watermark” punctuated by excerpts of Bad Company’s, “Bad Company”, each connected to the appropriate images that were flashing on the screen. I may even have gone as far as incorporating periods of silence with the sounds of war: screaming, gunshots, helicopters etc. I would want to end the project with an extended view of the painting, Monet’s Water liles in grand scale and then with an image of the Vietnam memorial, slowly panning down until it faded into oblivion. And perhaps, it will be created one day. I have my father’s photo album from his tour there and would love to be able to use his original images since my poem is about his experience.

What I was able to do currently, was to focus on the actual text. I took both original poems and created a Wordle using as many words as were allowed. All of the words from “Monet’s Water lilies” (the poem) fit but at 300 words, I still had to truncate my original poem, “Vietnam.” There was no way to control what 300 words were picked by the program. I regenerated the text choice and layout many times until I was happy with the arrangement and word choice. Then I tried to choose font and color that was suggestive of mood I was trying to create. After seeing what both originals looked like, I decided to look for the core or heart of each poem. In the “Water lilies”, it was basically the title and the last stanza. In my poem, I choose individual words and phrases. I did this all in Wordle having the computer help me to revise both poems until I felt the visual experience mirrored the essence of the meaning that I was trying to convey. I chose, after much debate, to leave the original poems’ texts out. This was my current way of letting go of ownership and releasing the creation.